

**1999 ECOS-EPA NEPPS Workshop  
Breaking Down Barriers for Environmental Results  
November 30 - December 2, 1999  
Baltimore, Maryland**

**Workshop Report  
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## **I. Executive Summary**

### **A. Overall meeting summary**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) co-sponsored a workshop on November 30 - December 2, 1999, for State and EPA personnel who are responsible for implementing the National Environmental Performance Partnership System (NEPPS). Approximately 160 representatives from 26 States, nine EPA Regional offices and EPA Headquarters attended the meeting. The workshop was designed primarily for high- to mid-level staff responsible for coordinating NEPPS implementation and policies in the States, EPA Regions and Headquarters.

The workshop's primary goal was identifying the three top issues needing resolution to make NEPPS a success, and discussing and developing action plans to resolve those issues. The workshop's secondary goals were providing a national forum to discuss other issues and providing basic training and information on NEPPS implementation. Workshop organizers believed a successful outcome was likely to have two components:

1. achievable recommendations for action to address two or three of the most pressing issues over the next year; and
2. a plan for defining a longer term agenda and addressing “bigger picture” issues that cannot be addressed over the next year.

The workshop's first morning included presentations and discussions designed to set the stage for the rest of the workshop. Following the opening session, participants spent a half day each on three key issue areas: culture change, information management, and joint planning. During the evenings, volunteers consolidated many ideas into a shorter list of recommendations within each issue area. On the final morning, in plenary session, participants reviewed and discussed the shorter lists. Following the workshop, the recommendations were to be refined and integrated into a single, comprehensive set of recommendations for action.

During opening remarks, Diane Thompson, EPA Associate Administrator in the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations (OCIR), challenged participants to create a road map for NEPPS for the next year, including “things we need to focus on, agenda items for us as agency leaders in our efforts to make NEPPS more effective and constructive.” Robert Varney, commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and past-president of ECOS, said NEPPS requires a culture change that will encounter resistance, requiring us to

continuously improve our approach over time. NEPPS, he said, “is extremely important. It can’t be overemphasized. It allows thoughtful allocation of resources and setting direction into the next century.”

Bill Crews, NEPPS Team Leader in OCIR, said the outcomes of the workshop would be taken to ECOS at its Spring meeting in Philadelphia and to EPA’s NEPPS Senior Management Team and Reinvention Action Council. The ECOS-EPA team in charge of the NEPPS Joint System Evaluation also would review the workshop results, he said.

DeWitt John of the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) moderated a panel of outside experts who had studied the implementation of NEPPS. The U.S. General Accounting Office recommended that EPA and the States focus on six key issues: reducing oversight, improving core performance measures, alleviating staff resistance, allowing greater grant flexibility, improving public participation, and improving Headquarters-Regional-State communication. The Office of Inspector General recommended: 1) systematically assessing state requirements; 2) developing better performance measures; 3) developing NEPPS guidance; and 4) assigning a specific office with responsibility to improve NEPPS. The Tellus Institute recommended that EPA and States: 1) stop overlaying NEPPS on the conventional program management system; 2) recommit to NEPPS as a single system for federal oversight; and 3) resolve conflicts and make the performance partnership agreement a ruling document that maximizes integration across programs. The Environmental Law Institute recommended: 1) Congress should authorize NEPPS concepts of flexibility and workload shifting; 2) EPA and States should invest in data collection, consolidation and streamlining; 3) planners should engage program managers in identifying priority work and deferring non-priority work. A Georgetown University researcher recommended four ways to improve performance measurement systems: regional cooperation, stakeholder involvement, an academic consultant, or legislative pressure.

## **B. Results and next steps**

During the meeting, participants produced the following recommendations for the three main issue areas:

### **1. Culture Change**

#### Communication

1. EPA should to sponsor NEPPS meetings for the Regional and national program managers to reinforce the importance of NEPPS and share information among States. (Short and Long Term)
2. EPA should better reflect/promote NEPPS on the EPA Web Page. (Short term)
3. EPA should to include NEPPS in the EPA Annual Performance Report. (Short term)
4. EPA, States, and ECOS should send a recommitment memo from Administrator, National Program Managers, Regional Administrators, and the Commissioners (States) with ECOS. (Short term)
5. EPA and ECOS need to develop a communication strategy and outreach plan. (Long term)

### Accountability

6. EPA and ECOS need to identify a new group of NEPPS champions within the States, EPA Headquarters, and Regions. (Short term)
7. EPA and ECOS need to define differential oversight. (Long Term)
8. EPA and States need to define roles responsibilities of States, EPA, and National Program Managers. (Long Term)
9. ECOS should prepare a NEPPS recommitment document for discussion /strategies on the State/EPA relationship at its Spring meeting. (Short Term)
10. EPA should include NEPPS in EPA management reviews and EPA and States need to include NEPPS in employee performance standards at all levels. (Long Term)

### Measurement

11. EPA and States need to commit more to performance-based outcomes and ensure accountability for those outcomes.(Long Term)
12. EPA and ECOS need to better define reporting requirements -- of what and to whom.(Long Term)
13. EPA needs to implement more outcome-based audits by EPA, not audits of activities. (Long Term)

### Integration

14. EPA needs to recognize importance of NEPPS and integrate it into their Strategic Plan. (Short Term)
15. EPA and State program managers need to spend more time up front evaluating performance outcomes vs. negotiating output activities. (Long Term)
16. EPA needs to align the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), core performance measures (CPMs), national databases, and measures identified by the Center for Environmental Information and Statistics (CEIS) (one set of measures). (Long Term)
17. EPA and States need to align and integrate all program and operating agreements with NEPPS.(Long Term)

### Information Sharing

18. EPA and ECOS need to compile a Best Management Practices Manual that provides “helpful hints for success” and includes suggestions or successful programs. (Short Term -- and continued)

## **2. Information Management**

1. Endorse efforts to develop a Best Management Practices manual for performance measurement systems; include benchmarking of lessons learned in previous efforts from States and industry. (The workgroup's knowledge transfer team was to meet in Baltimore on Dec. 3 to move forward on this initiative.) (Short term)
2. Assess current alignment of various national performance measures and recommend next steps for pursuing alignment. The group's long-term goal is one set of measures. (Short term)

3. Inventory existing work at the State, federal and local levels to address the question of what information users (environmental managers, general public, academics, etc.) want to know. (Short term)

### **3. Joint Planning**

1. Recommit EPA and State leadership. (Short term)
2. Write "letters of interest" from Headquarters to Regional administrators, Regional administrators to States, States to Regional administrators. (Short term)
3. Establish definitions and boundaries for joint planning and flexibility, and undertake pilots. (Short term)
4. Inter-personnel Act assignments (IPAs) from EPA to States – leverage federal resources to do more in-State work. (Near short term)
5. Increased face-to-face meetings. (Near short term)
6. EPA Annual Performance Report (APR) should specifically acknowledge and value different approaches to environmental protection (specifically NEPPS). (Near short term)
7. Sharing of experiences – clearinghouse. (Short term)
8. Work commitments from EPA to States to do work that contributes to environmental progress in the State, not just oversight of the State programs. (Short term)
9. Align CPMs, GPRA, databases, CEIS 10 questions, Associated Reporting Requirements (ARRs). (Short term)
10. Timing: National Program Manager (NPM) guidance early. (Short term)
11. Continued flexibility re forward funding. (Short term)
12. Early State/Regional involvement in guidance and priority development. (Short term)
13. Re-examine GPRA (now being done). (Short term)
14. Find out what Regions require [both] workplans and PPAs and why. (Near short term)
15. Revisit delegation agreements. (Near short term)
16. Reduce initiatives and align with NEPPS. (Short term)

Following the workshop, the workshop steering committee condensed the final recommendations into a set of tables, as shown on pages 41-45. These recommendations were to be reviewed by EPA's NEPPS Senior Management Team and Reinvention Action Council, as well as ECOS' Strategic Planning Committee. An ECOS-EPA committee working on a joint assessment of NEPPS also was to review the results.